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A LETTER
to
MR. WARD,
one of the
MANAGERS
of the
THEATRE-ROYAL,
Manchester.

Occasioned by his intemperate Charge of
“ *Malignity and Falsehood* ”
against the Writer of
“ *Impartial Reflections,* ” &c.

BY CANDID.

The Stage I chose....a Subject fair and free...
’Tis yours....’tis mine....’tis public Property.
All common Exhibitions open lie
For Praise or Censure, to the common eye:



Manchester:

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A Letter, &c.

SIR,

The unqualified manner in which you have in so many ways publicly charged me with malice and falsehood, compels me to take this method of supporting what I have written, in doing which, I shall endeavour to prove from the whole tenor of the book, that even admitting myself to have been mistaken in some points, I cannot be supposed to have published errors with a malignant design; and that I have not been mistaken in any points...I shall further substantiate by facts, the charges exhibited against you of parsimony and illiberality as a manager, and of inactivity as a performer, to which cause I in part attribute the weak state of the company, and the consequent dissatisfaction of the public.

To effect this, it will be necessary to advert to the circumstances which induced me to write, and the manner in which I treated the subject. So few attractions has the theatre held out this season, and so little has it been attended, that the town may almost be said to have been deprived of theatrical amusement. As a lover of the drama, I hoped that some able and judicious critic would have aroused you to exertion, by just and severe animadversions on your conduct, or that the neg

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lect the managers experienced, would convince them that it is their interest to provide better for the entertainment of the town, and that the frequenters of the theatre might have again enjoyed the rational amusements of dramatic representation, without having the pleasure arising from the exertions of respectable and pleasing performers totally destroyed, by the disgusting and ridiculous attempts of people whom nature intended should earn their subsistence by means more useful perhaps, but much less difficult.

Conscious of my inability to do justice to the first mode, I should not have obtruded my observations on the public, but have waited in the hope that your reformation would have been produced by the second, had not a pamphlet, intitled "*A Peep, &c.*" made its appearance, in which I conceived the subject was so illiberally and injudiciously treated, in which the managers were censured where they merited praise, and that part of their conduct which produced the evil was past over in silence, in which some of the best performers were grossly abused, and censure so indiscriminately bestowed, that I conceived if it passed without notice, it might discourage performers of any merit from appearing before an audience who would suffer the judgment to be arraigned with impunity by such a scurrilous writer...in short if vulgar sarcasm and abuse were to be substituted for criticism, neither managers nor performers could have much inducement to attend to the interest of the theatre. I thought it required no extraordinary talents to counteract the evil such a publication might produce. I therefore attempted to rescue some characters who have been frequently cheered by public applause, from the obloquy and ridicule that writer wished to cast on them. In taking up my

pen for these purposes I surely was not actuated by any malignant motive; how little I deserve the charge of malignity *towards you as an individual*, will (I believe,) appear from the following reflections. Had personal malice influenced my observations, on *your* conduct, I should not have neglected to remind the public (which on the eve of your benefit you declared to have ever been your friend and patron) of two or three of the many instances of your ungrateful inactivity as a performer, which I then purposely passed over, my wish being only to convince you that although you are a favourite with the town, it has not been insensible of your indifference and want of exertion, and had you not called on me in so gross a manner, I should not have decended to particulars, but now *you* have made it indispensably necessary.

Last season Mr. Jones undertook, on very short notice, the part of Gossamer, in the comedy called "Laugh when you can," in consequence, as was alledged, of your sudden indisposition, and performed it with applause three or four weeks, I may say more than once after your appearance in the streets, *if not on the stage*. Mr. Jones performed that character with encreasing applause, yet you thought proper to take it from him and appear in it yourself, and notwithstanding you had so much time to study the part, you were imperfect in one of the first scenes, and were most deservedly hiss'd. How, Sir, did you conduct yourself on the occasion? as you have done on the present, with pride and insolence, and as no other performer, I believe, in any other respectable theatre would have dared, or been suffered to have done; you had the effrontery to come forward and tell the audience that you never had been so *insulted* in any of the numerous theatres in which you had perform-

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ed! You must have a considerable share of vanity, to suppose an audience would suffer you to talk of receiving an insult, when you had insulted it, by coming before it unprepared to sustain the character you had undertaken. I should think any further comment on this circumstance an insult to the understanding of my readers, for

- "Actors, a venal crew! receive support
- "From public bounty for the public sport.
- "To clap or hiss all have an equal claim,
- "The cobbler's and his lordship's right the same.
- "All join for their subsistence; all expect
- "Free leave to praise their worth, their faults correct."

CHURCHILL.

At the beginning of the present season, (Friday, December the 27th,) a comedy altered from the German by Prince Hoare, and called "Sighs, or the Slaughter," was represented here without your assistance, although you performed Mercurio on the Monday, and Gossamer on the Thursday in the same week, seemingly in perfect health and spirits. There were two characters in this play in your line, Totum and Hans Williams, and, in consequence of the derangement your neglect occasioned in the cast, the part of Adelbert, the hero of the piece, was attempted to be performed by Mr. Cross.

An agreeable comedy, called "What is she," was likewise brought out here this season, on the 7th day of January. In this play you did not deign to take a part, (which, I hope, you will not say you were prevented from doing by indisposition,) and the character of Period, which Mr. Lewis plays in

London, was given to Mr. Grant, who might have been more advantageously disposed of, so that your neglect injured the effect of the piece in more than one particular. I beg leave to remark in this place, that both these plays had been frequently represented in London with much applause, but have never been repeated in Manchester, therefore, I think we may fairly infer from their cold reception here, that some of the characters were not well sustained; which those were, I shall leave you to determine. I repeat, that these circumstances have been hitherto purposely left unnoticed, and I think that the injustice with which you have charged me with malice and falsehood, will be evident. If personal malice towards you had been my motive for writing, would the original intention and purport of my book have been to vindicate the managers and company from some of the unfounded asperities of the author of the "*Peep, &c.*?" would a *malignant individual* (as you have called me) have pointed out your only excellencies, and your truest interests?

That I did not praise as indiscriminately as the Peeper censured, (whose production I am almost ashamed to have noticed) I am willing to admit, and the more so, because I could not have done so without the grossest violation of truth, but I certainly intended to draw the line between puffing and abusing; and as far as my abilities could second my intention, I did draw that line. I blamed Mr. Banks as a manager, as much as I did you, in fact I coupled you; but he has a good quality to plead in his favour, to which you have little pretention, I mean DILIGENCE.

If I were hostile to *your* interests in particular, what inducement could I have for endeavouring to

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forward those of your wife? for it could not escape me, that they are inseparably connected. Had my object been to injure you, I should certainly have addressed you thus publicly *before* your benefit, and have reminded you of your presumption, in putting up your name for one this season, without the slightest pretensions to patronage on the occasion; and that you were indebted to what you are pleased to call my malice and falsehood, for the only excuse you could find for making such a claim. I should have reminded that part of the public whose patronage and support you *ought* to value most, that you evidently expected little from them, by your choosing the evening of a great holiday for your benefit, which proves, that while you were boasting of the kindness and patronage you had received from the respectable part of the community, you meant to level them with the vulgar, by selecting amusements adapted to the taste of a holiday mob.

Your appeal to the humanity of the town was however a happy thought, and pity would have held my hand, had you expressed yourself in temperate and decent terms, but that would not have suited *your* purpose so well. The artifices you resort to on the present occasion, bring to one's recollection those of a former period; when you solicited a benefit under somewhat similar circumstances as to pretensions. You at that time (about six or seven years ago) thought it convenient to possess the town with the notion that you were threatened for your political zeal forsooth, which you did by publishing letters to and from yourself, fabricated the Lord knows where, for after the appearance of your *two last precious morsels*, I will not even suppose *that you wrote them yourself*.

With these and similar benefit making tricks, do you attempt to make one great fool of your ever kind friend and patron, the public.

Now we come to the most serious part of the business, namely, to enquire to whom the charge of falsehood best applies, which I shall do, by asking a few plain questions respecting Mr. Raymond; whose character is so severely arraigned in your *card*. If you cannot answer them in the negative with truth, they undeniably transfer the burthen from my shoulders to your own, so that independent of other considerations, their importance ought to make you careful in your replies. Did not Mr. Raymond propose last season, to make a positive engagement with Mr. Banks and yourself, as managers, upon condition that you advanced his salary from two to three guineas per week? did you not refuse him these terms, upon the plea of other performers being led thereby to demand a similar advance, and did not Mr. Raymond obviate this objection, by telling you that the addition might be given to his wife, who would then have appeared upon the stage whenever you had thought proper? Did not you part with Mr. Raymond without these or any other terms being agreed upon, and was it not known to you that Mr. Raymond afterwards considered himself disengaged from you? Did not Mr. Banks after he was acquainted with Mr. Raymond's *London* engagement write to him in a very friendly manner, to request his assistance at Litchfield races? and would Mr. Banks have written such a letter, if Mr. Raymond's conduct had been what you represented it? Even if you have the means of disproving the facts implied by these questions, it will be incumbent on you to shew what terms were agreed upon between you and Mr. Ray-

mond; as well as to disprove the charges of illiberality and parsimony on the broad scale. Till this is done, the public, I believe, will attach but little credit to your assertions, unless they are of opinion that want of veracity on one point, is no impeachment of a man's testimony on another. I shall now proceed to Mr. Jones. If I am not right in attributing part of your conduct towards him to envy, I am sorry you gave so much reason for the supposition. He certainly was a very likely person from the kind of characters he excels in, to have excited it in your breast, especially if you possess as much of that engaging quality as is generally attributed to you, and your merit is the greater on that account, if you suppressed it; which many besides myself are rather incredulous about. I believe I am correct in saying, that the proposed advancement of Mr. Jones' salary, so much boasted of, turns out after all to have been *five shillings per week*, a mighty sum truly, to found a claim of liberality upon, *all* which, would have raised it to thirty shillings, exactly *half* the money another manager did not hesitate to offer him, as soon as he was sensible of his merit, and that no doubt without the tax of travelling expences, which in your company are said to amount to near a fifth of their salaries, to each of your performers who have families. If any thing but envy prevented you from taking the precaution of *binding* Mr. Jones down by law, it is, probably, that you yourself did not think he was well enough paid to authorise you to require such a security. There must have been *some* reason for this omission, and, whatever it was as it stood in the way of public gratification, and (I will add) of your own interest too, it ought to have been removed, and being yourself subject to such long and frequent indispositions, you should have been particularly

careful not to have parted for a trifling sum, with the only person who had been successful in making up your deficiencies to the satisfaction of the public, and at a time too when your company had been deprived of the support of a Cooke or a Raymond. But you suffered him to be lost, and got no one who could supply his place. Who then but the public has a right to complain on this occasion, and what apology can you make for such conduct ?

If you rewarded merit generously, and treated the performers with liberality, there could be no necessity to select for a town like this, such a motley group as your present company displays. You might certainly make up a company of performers, respectable in each line of acting ; and *keep them when you have got them*. But unless something is done by you I fear you will lose the few of that description you have left. I have been most reluctantly compelled by your intemperate addresses to the public to enter into particulars in support of what I had advanced. I shall therefore take my leave of you with wishing you may speedily recover from indispositions of *every kind*, and that your future exertions may leave no room for censure from even more *malignant individuals* than

CANDID.



W. Shelmerdine and Co. Printers, Deansgate, Manchester.

and I have not been successful in making up my mind as to whether or not I should go. I am sure that I shall be able to do so, but I am not sure that I shall be able to do so in a way that will be satisfactory to you. I am sure that I shall be able to do so, but I am not sure that I shall be able to do so in a way that will be satisfactory to you.

A circular ink stamp from the British Museum. The words "BRITISH" and "MUSEUM" are curved along the top and bottom edges respectively. In the center, the date "13 JY 85" is stamped horizontally. There are small dots separating the text from the date.

